



MEDIA CONTACT

B.J. Spamer
Executive Director, NamUs Operations
817-964-1879
BJ.Spamer@unthsc.edu

***** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE *****

NamUs Supports Medical Examiner and Coroner Communities with COVID-19 Cases

Fort Worth, Texas (April 15, 2020) – Since 2007, the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) has assisted medical examiner and coroner offices resolve cases that involve unidentified deceased persons, as well as remains that have been identified, but for whom no next of kin has been located (unclaimed persons). Funded and administered by the National Institute of Justice, and managed through a cooperative agreement with the UNT Center for Human Identification, NamUs supports case resolutions by providing database technology (located at www.NamUs.gov), forensic services, investigative support, and victim services to families impacted by the death or disappearance of a loved one.

Recognizing the potential to expand its support of stakeholders during this unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 cases, NamUs quickly modified its existing database technology to provide medical examiners, coroners, medicolegal death investigators, and allied forensic professionals with the ability to flag unidentified and unclaimed person cases as COVID-19 related. NamUs has also developed technology to support the bulk import of unclaimed person cases related to COVID-19. These tools will expedite unclaimed case entries and allow agencies to search and create lists of their COVID-19 cases for real-time accounting and reconciliation of unresolved cases.

While the COVID-19 indicator is not visible to members of the public, agencies can utilize the NamUs database to share public details of unidentified and unclaimed person cases in a system that is searchable by family members who are seeking information on loved ones believed to be missing or deceased. Secure areas within NamUs store information that is accessible only to registered, vetted law enforcement and medicolegal death investigation users, such as cause and manner of death, as well as the COVID-19 indicator.

In this current crisis, auxiliary storage sites and/or rapid burials have become necessary in areas heavily impacted by COVID-19. NamUs also contains fields to document any storage or burial information for future reference, should agencies choose to use the system for this purpose.

NamUs is honored to support the efforts of medical examiners and coroners during these challenging times.

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NamUs is administered by the National Institute of Justice and managed through a cooperative agreement with the University of North Texas Health Science Center's UNT Center for Human Identification (award number 2016-MU-BX-K007).

